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THE BEGINNINGS OF THE CHURCH IN LITTLE ROCK

Printed books throw very little light on the beginnings of Catholicity in the city of Little Rock. From letters and other documents which lay hidden in the archives of the chancery office at St. Louis, we have collected some information which is new, at least in part. We shall not go far beyond these documents, since it is not our intention to write a complete history of these beginnings, but only to furnish material hitherto inaccessible.

Nor do we purpose to enter into the early history of Catholicity in the Territory which attaches itself to the Fort of Arkansas Post, and to the valiant missionaries from the Society of Jesus and the Seminary of Quebec who, since the last decade of the seventeenth century, sailed down the Mississippi to minister to the Canadian trappers and hunters, and to the Indian tribes. We begin our story with the period following the Louisiana Purchase (1803).

The first priest who, after the cessation of the Spanish regime, came to the forlorn mission of the flood-beaten Post of Arkansas, was a certain Father Chauderat, who is often mentioned in the letters of the later missionaries. He confined his activities to the Post and Pine Bluff. Without any canonical mission he had come over from Kentucky, and remained from the spring of 1820 to the spring of 1821.

The next missionary, sent by Bishop Rosati, coadjutor of Bishop Du Bourg of Louisiana, was the Lazarist Father Odin.¹ In his letter to the Propagation of the Faith he states that he and the subdeacon Timon, C. M.,² reached the Arkansas River near Little Rock, in the fall of 1824:

Having spent a few days with five French families, 18 miles from Davidsonville, Ark., we directed our steps to Bate (*Batesville*) on the White River and towards Petit Rocher (*Little Rock*), a small town built on the bank of the Arkansas River and seat of the government. We were favorably received by the Catholics of the neighborhood, who never had been visited by a priest.

Having spent some time in missionary work with the Qapwa

¹ In 1842, FATHER ODIN was appointed Vicar-Apostolic of Texas; in 1861, Archbishop of New Orleans; died May 25, 1870.

² Bishop of Buffalo, 1847-1867.

(Kappa) Indians near the Post of Arkansas, they returned to the diocesan Seminary at the Barrens, in Perry Co., Mo.³

Whilst Bishop Rosati of St. Louis was still Administrator of the Diocese of New Orleans, he sent Father John Martin from Avoyelles, La., to the deserted and disorderly mission on the Arkansas. The distinguished botanist, Thomas Nuttall, who visited Arkansas in 1819, comments unfavorably upon the generality of those who inhabited the bank of the Arkansas; he found that every reasonable and rational amusement appeared to be swallowed up in dram-drinking, jockeying, and gambling; the more industrious and honest suffered from the dishonest practices of their indolent neighbors, renegadoes from justice, who had fled from honest society.⁴ Father Martin, commissioned by Rosati, June 13, 1829,⁵ spent some months amongst the neglected Creoles, and also visited the Catholic colonists near the State Capital, but he was a man of a scrupulous and stubborn disposition, absolutely unfit to gain the confidence of the ignorant settlers. When he left, they showed their aversion by slandering him outrageously.⁶

In November, 1831, Bishop Rosati of St. Louis, to whose diocese Arkansas belonged, sent two priests who were to fix their residence somewhere on the Arkansas River and stay there: the Gascon, Edmund Saulnier, formerly (1819) professor at St. Louis Academy and pro-rector of the Cathedral, and the young Fleming, Peter F. Beauprez. They arrived at the Post of Arkansas on December 16, 1831. The same winter Father Saulnier in his letters to the bishop mentions Little Rock repeatedly:

It would be good to have a priest at Little Rock; there are many ignorant Protestants there and very few Catholics; but a priest would have to know English well and be a good controversialist. Three priests, I believe, would for the moment be sufficient in the Territory; one at the Post, one at Pine Bluff, and one at Little Rock.⁷

"I wrote to the Governor, who answers as follows:

³ *Annales de la Prop. de la Foi*, II, p. 374.

⁴ *Cath. Encycl.*, I, p. 725.

⁵ *Ephemerides* of Bishop Rosati.

⁶ Letter of Dupuy, January 7, 1833.

⁷ Letter of Saulnier, December 24, 1831. The letters of Saulnier, Dupuy and Richard-Bole are all written in French and were translated in English for this sketch.

Little Rock, Jan. 12th, 1832.

Dear Sir:

I have this moment received yours of the 29th of this month & hasten to answer you that I will make some enquiry about the land described in your memorandum. I am gratified to learn that you are about to establish a church in this remote region. Many of my Catholic friends in Nelson and Washington Counties in Kentucky, would remove here immediately, if a church was established at this place. Permit me to say that you may expect from me kindness and liberality, for you know that the *Pope* and the Priests have ever worked in harmony. I have the honor to be Most Rev. Sir,

Your obdt. Servant,

JOHN POPE.

Mark the allusion which he makes of his name with the Pope. I wrote to him again, telling him that I would communicate to you his desire and to learn, if you wish to send another priest or send me. I do not think that it would be well for me to go, because I do not speak English well enough. . . . Since Little Rock is a place where all are English, where there are several lawyers, where the Legislature always meets, and where there are several Protestant ministers, an Englishman or Irishman is needed, *e. g.*, Mr. McMahon, perhaps also Mr. Lutz would do.⁸

Three priests would not be too many; one at the Post, another at Pine Bluff, and an "Anglais" at Little Rock.⁹

Census of Catholics in Arkansas, taken by Father Martin, in January, 1830:

	<i>Whites</i>	<i>Negroes</i>
Post of Arkansas.....	247	108
Jefferson Co.....	204	60
Petit Rocher.....	38	3
Fort Smith.....	33	3
Total.....	522	174

His census to me does not seem to be very exact; there may be one thousand and more.¹⁰

Father Saulnier never left the Post of Arkansas to visit the colonists further up the river. Father Beuprez, in January,

⁸ Father John McMahon was the first Irish priest ordained for St. Louis, November 20, 1831. He died at Galena, Ill., June 19, 1833. Father Jos. Ant. Lutz, b. at Odenheim, Baden, Germany, since 1828 had attended Indian Missions in Kansas, Wisconsin and Iowa. Since 1832 he was stationed at the Cathedral of St. Louis; he spoke English tolerably well and, in summer 1831, had been selected for the Arkansas Mission, but never went there. He died at New York in 1861.

⁹ Letter of Saulnier, February 27, 1833.

¹⁰ Letter of Saulnier, April 9, 1832.

1832, opened a mission a few miles below Pine Bluff, but never went as far as Little Rock. Utterly disgusted, before the end of the year, both left Arkansas, "this suburb of hell," as Beauprez called it, Saulnier July 14, to return to his beloved St. Louis, Beauprez October 25, to descend to Donaldson, La.¹¹

In October, 1832, Bishop Rosati appointed Father Annemond Dupuy, from Lyon, France, to Arkansas.¹² The Catholics of the Post made such an unfavorable impression upon him that he left them and fixed his residence below Pine Bluff, where Father Beauprez had opened his mission. From there he wrote to Rosati, January 7, 1833:

I did not go to Little Rock, but I received all possible information about the place. It seems, after all they tell me, that I cannot make an establishment there with the means I have. Therefore I came to the conclusion to stay at Pine Bluff.

It seems Rosati advised him to establish himself at the capital of the Territory, Little Rock. There somebody had donated land to the Bishop of St. Louis to found a Catholic center, but no one knew in what section the land was situated. Father Dupuy, after the great flood of 1833, had made a futile attempt at collecting at St. Louis. Descending to New Orleans on board the steamer *St. Louis*, August 23, 1833, he wrote a letter to his bishop in which he again mentioned the land at Little Rock:

We have forgotten several things: (1) You did not give me the deed of your land at Little Rock. What shall I do to get it? I thought you might send it to me by the *Missourian*. Perhaps I shall yet be at New Orleans when it arrives. Hence you must send it to Mr. Blanc and ask him to transmit it to me if I am gone.

He again speaks of Little Rock in a number of letters dated from Pine Bluff:

When I arrived here, I found my hut nearly destroyed by the overflow. . . . I was determined to go straight to Little Rock and settle there, but because I have not the deed to your land in the place, and since I see, just now, better dispositions than ever in the divers hamlets along the Arkansas, I resolved, with your kind permission, to work principally here, this year. I cannot see, however, without an ardent desire to rush into battle, that the Capital of this Territory which soon

¹¹ Various letters of Saulnier and Beauprez.

¹² Ephemerides of Bishop Rosati.

will be a State, be without a *House of God*, whilst two caverns of (? , illegible) are erected there.¹²

Little Rock grows from day to day. Catholics, they say, some French, some Dutch, have arrived in this Territory and settle in the neighborhood of Little Rock.¹³

Your land in this Territory is 36 miles from Little Rock. The soil is poor, and only a few settlers live near it. I doubt, whether for a long time there will be enough people there to build a chapel. It is not far from the road from Little Rock to Batesville. It would be best, in my opinion, to found the establishment in the town of Little Rock; it grows daily; it is the Capital of the Territory. Otherwise the preachers will take possession of it. The Catholics who are there, about 200 "Dutch" [meaning "*German*"] go to their "preaching," because there is no priest. Many have urged me to go there, but I would need at least six hundred dollars to build a chapel of wood. It would be a great pity to leave the place where I am now, because there are many people in this neighborhood; besides, up to this day, it is the center of Catholicity. The Post isn't anything; it is depopulating fast; besides, they are a lot of libertines. The heat oppresses me; I cannot work at anything; still, by the help of God, I have not been sick as yet.

Yesterday I had a wedding, the first since I am in this mission. When I came here, the people believed that the marriages contracted before a priest were no good.¹⁴

At last, in the summer, of 1834, Father Dupuy undertook the journey to Little Rock, two years and a half after the reestablishment of the Arkansas Mission by Bishop Rosati. He writes about this trip, August 7, 1834:

I have just returned from a journey to Petit Rocher (Little Rock), satisfied in every respect. I found about twenty Catholic families in the neighborhood, separated some 20 miles from each other. They earnestly ask for a priest and complain that You desert them; and, feeling the necessity of serving a *Supreme Being* and not being able to have the instruction required, they are compelled to receive it from the mouth of a false minister. Most of these Catholics have subscribed for two Presbyterian churches at Little Rock; one, of wood, is finished; the other, of brick, is not completed. In the city itself no Catholic could be shown to me, but there are said to be three families, who, seeing they were abandoned, did not declare themselves Catholics. About twenty German families had settled here, but about a month or two ago, they went 12 miles higher up the river. The city of Little Rock is superbly situated. Placed on a small hill on the right bank of the river Arkansas,

¹² Letter of Dupuy, December 26, 1833.

¹³ Letter of Dupuy, April 29, 1834.

¹⁴ Letter of Dupuy, July 9, 1834.

the city dominates an immense plain on both sides of the river. Most of the land is laid in very rich cotton fields. All the bottoms bristle with cypress forests, of which boards are made in large quantities; these are transported to New Orleans. The people here are very gentle, but the prejudice against the true religion is deeply rooted. Numbers of these circuit riding preachers pass here; all they do is spread calumnies against the Church. It is incredible, Monseigneur, in what perplexity these poor people are. The Protestants are mostly Deists, and the Catholics are not very far from the same condition, so much so, that several of them neglect to have their children baptized. Amongst those whom I visited, and who have not seen a priest since the coming of Father Martin, I baptized only one infant. But I am sure, that, if a priest came here, he would soon overcome the prejudices and refute the calumnies. But he will have to go through sufferings of every kind. A person must have been here to understand. . . In my third letter I asked you, if You want me to go to New Orleans this year or to St. Louis, or rather, if you shall send a priest on a tour of inspection through Arkansas. This, Monseigneur, I would wish to know, if You would be kind enough to answer. I cannot help to be restless in a country filled with scandals as this is. Before I started for Little Rock, I rose from a sickness which kept me in bed a week. A great many thought that I was dead. I was somewhat afraid myself, being such a distance from another priest.

Father Dupuy did not say Mass during his short stay in and near Little Rock. In the spring of 1835, Bishop Rosati sent an assistant to Father Dupuy, Rev. Charles Rolle, a native of Lorraine, who had recently been ordained in St. Louis. But the young priest, not being acclimated, died after a short illness, July 22, 1835. In August, Father Dupuy himself suffered an attack of bilious fever and was again so ill that his recovery was despaired of. On August 11, 1835, he sent the following letter to the bishop:

It is only a few days since I wrote to you, but I have to write again the subject of this letter being so important. It is to remind you, Monseigneur, of what I had already told you, that at Little Rock several Protestants desire to have a Catholic Church. I heard people talk of it several times, but I never have been accosted directly. . . They used a roundabout way to let me know of it, but when they saw that I paid no attention to the talk and learned that I was preparing to build a chapel at Pine Bluff, the wealthiest man, as they say, of the Territory, Mr. Chester Ashley, having inquired about me from my neighbors, makes to me, through one of his friends, Sam Roane, a rich, respectable and prudent man, the following proposition:

If I desire to go to Little Rock, or if you wish to send another talented

Catholic priest, he gives¹⁵ twelve lots of land in the city of Little Rock, optionally, where I would think the location was best, either all together in the same location, or in different parts of the city (I wish to remark that nearly half of the city belongs to him). Besides, for five years he will give fifty dollars in cash, and all this without putting any restraint on the liberty of the Catholic cult. On the contrary, he will do me the favor to let me have the lots at the price at which they are sold at present in Little Rock. I estimate the cost to be about two thousand dollars.

The condition he makes is, that a permanent school be erected for both sexes; from an explanation given me of his idea I conclude that it would be sufficient if I could get Sisters for the girls, and I myself would teach the boys.

Now, Monseigneur, what answer shall I give him? In the meantime I wrote that I would place his proposition before you, and that I would send him your answer. If I am permitted, Monseigneur, to give you my own idea, I would say that I really believe that Divine Providence by this offer relieves our poverty, which at this hour is our only obstacle, it seems, in Arkansas.

If, therefore, Monseigneur, you could send us two or three Sisters from the convent of Mr. Timon—I suppose it would take three of them because there are many to instruct, three who are well trained, for the people here are very much stuck up. Then, send me an assistant whose mother tongue is English. Nothing else is required in him to succeed, but to speak English well, to have sound logic, unshaken courage, invincible constancy and great prudence; with these qualities and the help of God we could accomplish all the good I hope for. . . .

Having received no answer to this letter, Father Dupuy, in October, 1835, personally went to St. Louis, to find that the Bishop could not enter upon the plans of Mr. Chester Ashley. To establish a school in a town so remote and at such an expense when the religious orders at St. Louis were short of teachers, was too perilous a venture. Father Dupuy returned to Pine Bluff sick in body and soul. His people, however, insisted that by all means they must have a school. On January 19, Dupuy wrote to his Bishop:

They have repeatedly asked to know, if they cannot have a school here. If you cannot establish one here, they insist on having one at Little Rock. Since you refused the offers which they made to me,

¹⁵ "Donnera," "he will give." It seems, however, this was by no means an absolute donation, as appears from the following passage of the letter which we give in the original French: "Il me favorisera à prendre les terres comme elles se vendent à présent au Petit Rocher. J'estime cela à plus de deux milles piastres."

they now, at Little Rock, build a college which will be governed, "dogmatized" and "moralized" by Protestants alone.

November 24, 1836, whilst Dupuy was at St. Louis to urge his claim for an assistant, Bishop Rosati appointed Rev. Peter Donnelly to aid him in the missionary field on the Arkansas River. Father Donnelly¹⁶ at once saw, that Dupuy's missionary system was ineffective and that radical changes were required. Wherefore, August 15, 1837, he abruptly took a boat to St. Louis. The result of this journey was, that Bishop Rosati, being "very much displeased" with Father Dupuy, on September 2, appointed Father Donnelly pastor of the missions on the Arkansas, and permitted Dupuy to leave the diocese and repair to New Orleans. The latter, deeply wounded by Donnelly's action, left for St. John the Baptist's, La., at the end of October 1837.¹⁷

Father Donnelly, no doubt, was a good collector and was also otherwise, at least in the beginning, successful in his labors. He saw, however, that the barren missionary field was too extensive for one man. He wrote to Bishop Rosati February 19, 1838:

I cannot go on as I would wish without someone to assist me. If I had one that would attend to New Gascony and the Post, I would commence another subscription at Little Rock for a church. I spoke to some on the subject. I hope we will prosper. It is true, the number of Catholics are few, but one must not be discouraged at that.

On March 23, 1838, Father Donnelly undertook his first journey to Little Rock. He writes about it from Little Rock, March 26:

Most Reverend and Dear Father in Jesus Christ:

With what pleasure and gratification do I look forward to that approaching day, when I hope to have the consolation of seeing Your

¹⁶ Having been educated on the Continent of Europe, Father Donnelly spoke French, but since he had never received any training in the English language, the spelling in his letters is very faulty and follows the sounds of the Irish brogue.

¹⁷ Father Dupuy's unexpected departure split the Catholics of Jefferson Co. into two camps: Antoine Barraqué of New Gascony was the leader of the friends of Father Donnelly, John Dodge and others favored Father Dupuy. From that period there are four petitions in the chancery archives of St. Louis, ranging from August to November, 1837. Also the Catholics and other citizens of Little Rock, hearing that an Irish priest had arrived in Arkansas, sent two petitions to Bishop Rosati, December 16, 1837, and November 22, 1838, asking for a priest and the erection of a Catholic church in their town.

Lordship visit me, so far distant from You! I hope you will feel satisfied with what is done and the prospects that offer.

I arrived at Little Rock on the 23d, in the morning, and after visiting some of the citizens on the 24th, I commenced my subscription, which runs thus:

We, the subscribers, whose names are affixed hereunto promise, bind and oblige ourselves to pay the sums annexed to our names for the purpose of purchasing a lot of ground and building a church in or at the City of Little Rock, under the superintendence of the Bishop of St. Louis or his agent, for the use and benefit of the Catholics of Little Rock and adjoining country.

Witness our hands, etc.

<i>Subscribers' names, Protestants</i>	<i>Subscribers' names, Catholics</i>
Charles Ashley..... \$100.00	Hewes Scull..... \$50.00
Judge Cross..... 50.00	D. W. Carroll..... 50.00
Captain Collins..... 50.00	Jacob Rider..... 100.00
J. H. Tucker..... 50.00	S. Marchong..... 50.00
L. M. Lincoln..... 25.00	
J. C. De Bauer..... 50.00	
W. Woodruff..... 25.00	
Jud. Johnson..... 50.00	

Thus far the encouragement that we have at Little Rock and the fruit of our day's labor! If I could but spend twelve or fifteen days in this city, that I might have an opportunity to make acquaintances, I would get a good subscription. It is my opinion that this place offers the best prospect of any other place of the description in America. The Catholics are but few, still I am discovering Catholics every day and persons that were considered heretofore to be Protestants.

Mr. Dugan, in whose house I stop, requests me to give you his best respects and hopes that he will have the pleasure of seeing you in Little Rock. It was in his house I said the first Mass. Mr. George Taafe of Rocky Comfort requests and hopes you will send him a few lines, letting him know when you expect to be at St. Mary's, Jefferson Co., and he and Mr. Foran expect to meet you there.

I close these few lines by requesting Your Grace's blessing.

I remain Your humble and obedient son in Jesus Christ,

PETER DONNELLY.

This letter proves that the first Mass celebrated at Little Rock was said by Rev. Peter Donnelly, in Mr. Dugan's house at the end of March, 1838.¹⁸ But the progress of the work was slow, owing principally to the illness of Father Donnelly. On November 28, 1838, he writes again:

¹⁸ Perhaps this first Mass was celebrated on the feast of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

I hasten to give you some idea of my labor since my return, which is very trivial, owing to the delicate state of my health which at this moment is very indifferent and has been so since I returned, so much so that I was not able to preach more than twice during the last six weeks. . . . This month has been unusually cold, which causes me to feel much worse.

I visited Little Rock twice since my return. On my second visit I commenced to collect part of the subscription to pay for the lots, but was obliged to abandon it on account of my indisposition. What I collected, I left in the hands of Mr. Dugan, from whom I bought the lots, except "a trifle that I spent" in going up and down and during my stay there. I had no money left after returning home; what I had I was obliged to advance on the Sisters' passage and other expenses contracted by them. . . .¹⁹

Another letter is dated December 12, 1838:

. . . if my health continues to decline as it has, since I saw you, I think my hour is not far distant. Thanks be to God for all things! If I do not get better in spring or when the warm weather comes, I will be obliged to quit the mission and return to St. Louis. When I was at Little Rock the last time, the Legislature was then sitting. I had a bill presented for the incorporation of church property. I have not yet heard what the result was or if it passed. . . .

In the spring of 1839, he writes:

I was at Little Rock in the fore part of the week, collecting some money to pay for the lots which I bought. I collected and paid 450 dollars; there remain 254 dollars to be paid as yet. I was so ill that I could not remain to collect the entire amount. I got home on the 23d and had to keep my bed on the 24th, but feel somewhat better today. Necessity compels me to depart for the Post tomorrow. . . . I was in expectation that by this time the other priests²⁰ would be here, as you mention in your last letter. . . . The number of Catholics is increasing daily at Little Rock. There are several families that came within the last month. It is said there are many more coming from Vicksburg; they have heard it said that there was a church to be built at Little Rock shortly. A good opportunity offers if it be only attended to. I hope and pray that Almighty God may enable you in making a good

¹⁹ From Ste. Genevieve in 1838, Sister Agnes Hart, with two other Sisters went to Pine Bluff, where St. Mary's Convent School was opened, October 11, 1838. A year later, August 20, 1839, she passed from the scenes of her earthly labors to find eternal rest. The school was continued until 1842, when the Sisters moved to St. Ambrose, Post of Arkansas. (ANNA C. MINOGUE, *Loretto, Annals of the Century*, New York, 1812.)

²⁰ Fathers I. Richard-Bole and A. S. Paris.

selection or appointment for that city, who will complete St. Peter's church in the Rock and on the Rock, which I may say is now begun. . .²¹

Father Donnelly's health was so precarious that he asked Bishop Rosati for permission to go to Ireland. The bishop notes down in his official Ephemerides, that May 21, 1839, he permitted Rev. Peter Donnelly to return to Ireland and that the same day, he appointed Father Joseph Richard-Bole pastor of the Arkansas missions, and Father Aug. Simon Paris his assistant. These two priests, with Rev. Franc. Jos. Renaud, had arrived in St. Louis from France, November 16, 1838; all three had been parish priests in the diocese of Besançon. As soon as Richard-Bole arrived at Pine Bluff, he took an inventory in which he also mentions the mission at Little Rock (June 13, 1839):

Mr. Donnelly has opened a subscription at Little Rock. Twenty-nine subscribers gave their names for a sum of 1,030 dollars. Mr. Donnelly has received 505 dollars; of them he remitted 455 dollars to Mr. Diogen²² (this Mr. Diogen is that Irishman who built a house at St. Mary's on the church land), for two lots of land situated in the city of Little Rock which he bought to build a church. This Mr. Diogen sold these two lots to Mr. Donnelly for one thousand dollars and at the same time subscribed 250 dollars for the church, so that the real price of the land bought from Mr. Diogen is 750 dollars. When the land is paid for, there will remain 300 dollars for the building of the church which he promised to commence very soon.

Mr. Donnelly has remitted to us an act by which Mr. Crosse gives ten acres of land a mile and a quarter from Little Rock. This land is to be used for the construction of a church subject to the will of his Lordship, the Bishop of St. Louis.

It had been Father Donnelly's intention to return to Ireland, but he changed his mind. Probably he had not expected that his rash resignation would be acted upon by the bishop so promptly. He stayed about the mission for some time to the great chagrin of Father Richard-Bole. Then he went to St. Louis and was appointed pastor of Gravois (Kirkwood), January 31, 1840. Father Richard-Bole, the new pastor, did not go to Little Rock before October, four months after his arrival in Arkansas. He writes, October 29, 1839:

²¹ Letter of Donnelly, May 26, 1839.

²² Mr. A. G. Dugan, in whose house the first Mass was celebrated at Little Rock.

I have been at Little Rock last week. I am convinced that Mr. Donnelly has spoiled everything there by his wild promises, which he could not realize and which are difficult to carry out. He has received 505 dollars; he bought a plot of land for one thousand dollars and with this asset he wanted to build church, school, etc. Wherewith? With the money he expects from Your Lordship and with the collections he intended to take up at New York, St. Louis, New Orleans, etc. At first, when we came, he was glad to see us. But when we spoke to him of his promises, impossible to realize with empty wishes, where there are no means to accomplish them, he changed his behavior. I told him that great things will be wrought here, because man in them, it seems, shall be nothing; God will do it all.

Visiting the Catholics, I found several families with a dozen of unbaptized children of every age. It will be necessary to pass several days with such Catholics to work amongst them with a good will. I have heard them say: I don't want to be Catholic any more; so totally have they been neglected. I speak here of Catholics who live on the farms in the vicinity of Little Rock. I believe that in and around Little Rock there are at least a hundred and fifty of them. A priest who labors here cannot count on the people for several years, but must rely on the aid of the Propaganda. I say, if there is any mission who needs such aid, it is this one.

In spite of our poverty we need someone to share it with us. The work grows too abundant, two are not sufficient for it. I want to tell you, however, that I have induced the faithful of St. Mary's to give 250 dollars a year; they shall try to make it 300 dollars and 250 bushel of corn; at New Gascony they shall give 200 dollars and about 100 bushels of corn; both will build a house.

There was some trouble between Mr. Dugan and the people at the Pine Bluff Mission on account of a house which Dugan, following the advice of his friend, Father Donnelly, had built on the church property and which they threatened to take away from him.²³ It seems, Father Richard-Bole was in contention

²³ A. G. Dugan (not Duggan) came from Zanesville, Ohio, to Little Rock in 1837. His wife was a daughter of Richard Noble, "a convert Catholic near Brownsville, Pa., whose house, heart and purse was always open to priests and religious as they passed, and was made a general resting place on their journey east and west." At Little Rock he became acquainted with Father Donnelly who, when at Little Rock, enjoyed Dugan's hospitality. He was induced to move his family and store to St. Mary's, Pine Bluff, by Father Donnelly, Creed Taylor (a convert of Father Dupuy), F. N. Vangine and others. Upon consultation with Father Donnelly he built a house on an unenclosed corner of the church land. Father Donnelly said: "that there must be a house built for the priest at all events and that if Dugan found that the place would not suit him, the house would answer the purpose and the congregation would take it at what it cost Dugan." (Letter of A. G. Dugan to Bishop Rosati, September 12, 1839). Dugan at the time was not aware that the

with Dugan also about the church property at Little Rock. In his letter of November 19, 1839, he says:

But there exists another difficulty with Dugan on account of the two lots which Mr. Donnelly bought from him. The two lots cost Mr. Dugan 700 dollars; Mr. Donnelly bought them for a thousand dollars. I was told that Dugan still held a deed of trust on them. When I found this to be true and when I spoke to Mr. Dugan about it, he demanded immediate payment. I told him, he should give me a quit claim deed or some security, that he should let us have the land at the price he paid for it, or return the money he had already received, but he would not consent to either demand.

I was astonished to see on the land at Little Rock a worthless house, rented at five dollars a month. Mr. Dugan and Donnelly never mentioned this to me. Donnelly drew the rent.

Monseigneur, the conduct of Mr. Donnelly appears inexplicable to me. It shows duplicity, absolutely no delicacy. Regarding the affair with Mr. Dugan, I do not know how to settle it. He wants what he wants. He does not show to me the same face as to Mr. Donnelly with whom he has done good business—nor is he as religious a man as you were told. I can prove this assertion as everything else I said before.

Permit me, Monseigneur, to say that Mr. Dugan wrote to you, only because we could not grant him all he wanted.²⁴ Therefore he saw fit to make a false statement of the case; and this statement was confirmed by the testimony of a priest²⁵ who puts himself in contradiction with himself and in opposition to trustworthy witnesses and places our administration in conflict with that of Your Lordship.

It is hard for us to find ourselves in such a position, especially in a country where so many things have happened which disparage the priests and rob them of the people's confidence. Mr. Donnelly is not one of the least guilty ones in this respect.

I retain the letter of Mr. Dugan; he does not know that I have it; he has the one which is destined for me. . . .²⁶

laws of Arkansas gave the owner of land a title to all improvements made on it, without a written contract to the contrary. Depending on this state law the congregation, or rather Taylor and Vangine who controlled the affairs of St. Mary's Mission, tried to take the house from Dugan without any compensation. They would not allow him to move the house to a small piece of land he had purchased a quarter of a mile below the church grounds. Father "Bow!" (Richard-Bole) refused to interfere. This is Dugan's statement of the case. Father Richard-Bole, however, in his letter of November 19, says that this statement is false. The Dugan family was well acquainted with Bishops Flaget and Purcell, with Revs. Montgomery, Young and Badin. Dugan's well-written letter is preserved in the archives of the chancery office of St. Louis.

²⁴ Father Richard-Bole is referring to Dugan's letter to Rosati, mentioned before.

²⁵ Father Donnelly.

²⁶ It seems, Bishop Rosati, in sending the letters by error, sent Dugan's letter to Father Richard-Bole and Richard-Bole's letter to Dugan.

We have a great demand to make to Your Lordship: if it happens that complaints are sent against our administration, would you be kind enough to convey to us the knowledge of them? It would be painful for us to see our administration disowned and condemned without a chance to defend ourselves. You may rest assured that we shall tell Your Lordship in all sincerity the truth on every topic. We do not pretend to believe that all we do is correct, but we can assure you that our intentions are straight and upright.

In another letter of January 29, 1840, Father Richard-Bole writes:

Concerning Little Rock I wish to say that it is important to establish a school there. I do not know how to go about it, but to leave Little Rock without a school, means a great loss to our religion.

With Mr. Dugan I cannot settle. I cannot tell you what he wants; he does not know it himself, I believe. The land which Mr. Donnelly bought from Mr. Dugan at Little Rock has apparently no value (*vaut rien*). If we do not want to abandon everything to him, we have to bring him into court. This affair has caused me a great deal of trouble.

I intend to go to Little Rock next week. If I can settle with Mr. Dugan, I shall sell the land or take the money which he has received and commence to build a church elsewhere. . . . I have good prospects for help. I shall build the church of brick. Have the kindness to give me all the information about the laying of the cornerstone. You know that here everybody is Protestant—there are some Catholics, but in the case of a great number of them, I would wish they were Protestants.²⁷

I passed the last week at Little Rock. I sold the two lots which Mr. Donnelly had bought. I could not sell them, however, for what they cost, except by waiting for the money more than a year. I have bought twelve lots of ground which form an entire block, on an elevation which dominates the whole city. In this vicinity building is going on now; they say that a thousand houses will be built there. The lots cost 200 dollars each, payable within five years. I shall have another five years to pay, but after the first five I would have to pay 10 per cent interest on the principal; the interest does not accumulate. I took twelve lots to have room for an establishment if it be possible to have one later on, as also to be able to sell part, if I could not meet my obligation.

I have also furnished a plan for a church, 55 by 35; but 15 ft. will be taken off for a sacristy and a living room for the priest. If I stay here, I hope to raise enough money for the foundation and for the brick. I do not intend to go further at present; we shall see what can be done later on. We expect Mr. Timon, and we shall make use of his presence for the blessing of the foundation, for I shall not dare to undertake a solemn blessing alone. I am expecting Mr. Timon or your instructions on this

²⁷ Letter of Richard-Bole of February 15, 1840.

point. If anything is to be accomplished at Little Rock, there must be a resident priest here. One for the Post, one for St. Mary's; both shall have several stations and more work than they can do. How I would wish to see you for a few moments about these missions, to get your advice and your instructions, if it were possible to get some subscriptions at St. Louis for Little Rock!

After Mr. Dugan had covered me with his reproaches, he threw himself at my feet. As far as Little Rock is concerned, the affair with him is settled; regarding the house he built at Pine Bluff, Mr. Timon may settle that when he comes.²⁸

On April 21, 1840, Father Richard-Bole sent his last letter to the Bishop:

I shall leave St. Mary's for some weeks and take the next steamboat to Little Rock to labor there. The people have been very negligent, and we need the assistance of your prayers. I shall now start to build the church of which I wrote to you in my preceding letter.

I hear from Mr. Renaud that you are preparing to go to Rome. We shall pray daily that the Angel of the Lord may accompany you and lead you back safely like the son of Tobias. I shall not have the pleasure of receiving your benediction before you start, but I hope to have it when you return. You will visit the tombs of the Apostles. You know what this mission is; would Your Lordship ask for me for some of that apostolic spirit, needed to carry on the work of God? . . .²⁹

It seems, after Rosati was gone, Father Richard-Bole did not venture to erect a church at Little Rock. There was certainly not even the beginning of a church at the place, when Bishop Byrne, in 1844, arrived there. But the Loretine Sisters, in 1841, opened a school at Little Rock. The Superior of the four Sisters was Sister Alodia Vessels.

²⁸ Letter of March 14, 1840.

²⁹ There is considerable confusion in the St. Louis documents regarding the titulars of the various chapels and missions. According to a document, written by Saulnier *c.* 1850, the church below Pine Bluff, in 1839, was dedicated to the Blessed Virgin, the church at New Gascony to St. Irenaeus, the mission at Little Rock to St. Ambrose, at Napoleon to St. Lucy and at the Post to St. Dennis. The statistics of 1843 and 1844 call the mission of Little Rock St. Irenaeus, the church of the Post St. Ambrose. The Almanac (Directory) of 1838-1842, calls the church of Pine Bluff after St. Irenaeus, and in 1843 and 1844 the Almanacs give St. Mary as the titular of the church at New Gascony. It is certain, however, that the church at New Gascony up to the coming of Bishop Byrne was dedicated to St. Irenaeus, that of Pine Bluff to St. Mary, that of the Post before 1842, to St. Dennis, after 1842, to St. Ambrose. It was Father Richard-Bole who elected St. Irenaeus (not St. Ambrose) patron of the Little Rock Mission. The chapel built *a.* 1845, was dedicated to the Annunciation of Mary, the later cathedral to St. Andrew.

When it became known that a diocese had been erected with the episcopal See at Little Rock, and that a perfect stranger, Rev. Andrew Byrne, of St. Andrew's Church, New York, was to be its first bishop, Father Richard-Bole left Arkansas, to return to St. Louis.³⁰ The Loretine Sisters, by poverty, were compelled to give up their schools, both at the Post and at Little Rock (the academy at Pine Bluff had been closed in 1842), and to return to Ste. Genevieve and to Kentucky. The old French and Creole regime was buried for ever. All the St. Louis priests had withdrawn, but, in 1845, Bishop Byrne, with the Irish Fathers John Corry, Peter Walsh, P. Canavan, John Monaghan, Thomas McKeone and others, ushered in a new era.

REV. F. G. HOLWECK,
St. Louis, Mo.

³⁰ He went to Louisiana later, and on his way to France was lost at sea, a. 1847.